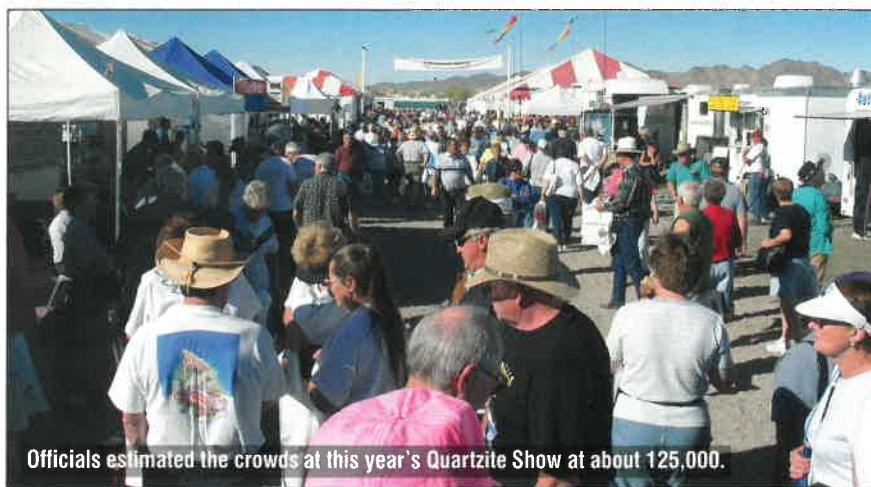


# Quartzite RV Show Reports More Than 125,000 at 35th Annual Event, Record-Breaking Retail Sales



'People come here to shop. The only time they sit down is when they're tired and want something to eat,' said show director and owner Kenny King, noting that about 250 companies were represented occupying approximately 360 exhibit spaces.



Officials estimated the crowds at this year's Quartzite Show at about 125,000.

Even Kenny King, the acknowledged catalyst behind the annual late January phenomenon, is unclear how the Quartzite RV Show snowballed into what is purportedly the largest gathering of RVers in the nation.

"I'm still not sure how the show turned into this Woodstock-size event. They claim that when we open our gates, Quartzite has the third-largest population in Arizona," said King, who estimated he's been involved in the RV industry "in some aspect" for 50-plus years, originally supplying fabric to RV awning makers. "It amazes me every year that people keep coming back. I still get

sick to my stomach that first day, worried that nobody will show up. But when the gates open up and there is a quarter-mile-long traffic jam and 1,000 people in line, I figure we're going to be OK."

This year's 35th edition again backed up the show's lofty claim as King reported that the crowd swelled to more than 125,000 people during the course of the Jan. 20-28 event, which, in turn, generated record sales for exhibitors.

"Retail sales were brisk with many all-time by several veteran participants," King related, noting that about 250 companies were represented occupying approximately

360 exhibit spaces. "One exhibitor claimed that they had just finished up the Barrett-Jackson classic car auction, one of the premier events in that industry, and they had surpassed their total sales halfway through the second day of the Quartzite Show."

In line with reports from other venues in the early round of 2018 RV shows, King said that he observed a decidedly younger demographic among attendees.

"The crowd seemed much younger than ever before," he stated. "Where once you would rarely see anyone under the age of 55 in Quartzite, young families pushing strollers while holding other sibling's hands were prevalent. I think that's definitely a good sign for the show and the future of the RV industry."

## Quartzite's Setting, King's Drive Powered Growth

Perhaps Quartzite's roots offer some clues to the show's success. The former Arizona gold-mining town was long known for its popular rock-and-mineral show, which also proved to be a strong draw for the RVing community. The area also became a haven for snowbird RVers as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) permits camping on a huge tract of land in the Sonoran Desert for six months of the year.

"Quartzite is situated near a lot of

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attractions and shopping venues in the area," King said. "I renamed our show the Quartzsite Sports, Vacation and RV Show because there are just so many things for people to do."

The other part of the equation is King, a tireless promoter with countless connections throughout the industry. Although he shuns any official title, he has in effect directed the show since he and his partner, Mal Mallory, bought 20 acres adjacent to the BLM property in 1997.

"When we first started out, it was kind



**Kenny King (center) has been the Quartzsite Show director since 1997.**

of like Barnum and Bailey," King recalled. "For a number of years we had a stage where we held seminars and had some local entertainment. I remember Camping World founder Dave Garvin actually had a professional auctioneer. But it never was well-attended — people come here to shop. The only time they sit down is when they're tired and want something to eat."

King, who has always employed a hands-on management style, stays on the move throughout the show, networking with vendors and interacting with attendees.

"I don't just sit in a tent when the show is running," he said, noting that he recently took sole ownership of the Quartzsite Show after buying out Mallory who retired last April. "I'm out there, talking to our exhibitors and with the RVers — just making sure everyone is enjoying the show and seeing if there is anything we need to do."

**Quartzsite Show Continues to Evolve**

King maintained that while the show grew in size and capacity, it also continued to incorporate new elements over the years to handle the crowds and improve the show for exhibitors.

"The RV exhibitors used to just set up a table or a tent and start selling," he related. "But it's become more organized over the years in that respect. Vendors now come here with a full staff and then we have a miniature warehouse set up

where we can receive product from UPS and deliver it right to their booths. So it's actually pretty organized."

One of the features that further distinguishes Quartzsite, according to King, is that the show hosts service days during the event offering RVers access to a "full-blown service department."

"The dealers come in, put down cement slabs, and then are doing complete installations when customers purchase a product," he said. "We have a company, Redlands Truck and RV from California, that has 50 guys on hand for installations. It just makes the whole process that much easier for the customer."

King related that one of his most loyal patrons over the years has been California-based Paul Evert's RV Country.

"For the last 10 to 15 years he's been bringing in upwards of 200 units. Right now, Paul Evert's is the exclusive dealer on my property — the rest of the dealers set up along the main thoroughfares to Quartzsite. Evert's display sits on a couple of acres and then he rents another four acres. They come here with a full show team including PDI staff and service techs."

As the show continued to evolve, King admitted he ran into a few speed bumps along the way — but he identified his biggest challenge in recent years as the rampant consolidation that has spread across the industry in recent years.

"It's really different now," King said. "We used to have individual booths for all the vendors. But now it seems they're all owned by a handful of companies. The problem for us is that if you don't get that parent company, then you don't get any of their affiliates. But we'll keep fighting the battle, just with a different cast of characters."

**King Eyes Exit, But Show Will Go On**

King, who will be 70 next April, estimates that he'll be in the game for another eight years, working until "I get my partner paid off." When he does step away, his appointed successor is his daughter, Kimmy, who has been involved in various capacities for several years.

"Kimmy will slowly take things over and then I'll hand her the keys," King said. "She, and her husband, Bryan, who has been in training for two years with the show, will be able to run it like Mal and I did all those years. It will give them a nice life in the future, as long as they can keep this thing rolling, which I am confident they can."

"At this point, I can't really imagine not being involved, but it's getting to be that time. Without a doubt it's been a great ride." **RVB**